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ĐORĐE NATOŠEVIĆ ON THE STATE OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE³

ABSTRACT: Đorđe Natošević (1821–1887) was a physician, an educator and President of Matica srpska. Although in the most of his books and papers he talked about the problems of the Serbian schools, Đ. Natošević saw his mission as much wider. In the text entitled *Why Our People in Austria Perishes*, he tried to understand the general state of the Serbian people in his own era, as well as to offer an explanation for such a state. In this paper the claims from the text mentioned are presented and critically evaluated. Since Đ. Natošević worked at the time when sociology had not been constituted yet as a science, and since his text has got some elements of the sociological analysis, the authors believe that he should be seen as one of the forerunners of the Serbian sociology.

KEYWORDS: Hapsburg monarchy, Đorđe Natošević, forerunners, sociology, Serbian people.

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INTRODUCTION

Serbian sociology has a long and praiseworthy tradition and there is a large number of outstanding individuals who have contributed to its establishment and development, such as Mirko Kosić (1892-1956), Đorđe Tasić (1892-1943), Slobodan Jovanović (1869-1958) and Sreten Vukosavljević (1881-1960). At the very beginning of its regular annual scientific gathering in 2011, the Serbian Sociological Society dedicated the very topic of the gathering („A Hundred Years of Sociology in Serbia”) and the extensive (four-volume) special edition of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* deriving from it (*Sociološki pregled*, 2012) to the initiators and founders among Serbs. These volumes of the journal included the papers focusing on the forerunners of Serbian sociology, dedicated to the individuals who had dealt with social matters, whereas, speaking of education, they came from different social and even natural sciences, but sometimes had no academic education at all: Svetozar Marković (1846-1875), Valtazar Bogišić (1834-1908), Jovan Cvijić (1865-1927) and Mihailo Avramović (1864-1945).⁴ Without these forerunners, there would have been neither subsequent founders nor Serbian sociology in general. In this paper, the authors present and evaluate the contribution of one of the so far neglected forerunners of Serbian sociology, Đorđe Natošević (1821-1887), a physician, educational worker and President of Matica. In the majority of his published texts Đ. Natošević focused on the issues of education or, more precisely, the functioning of schools and the school system among the Serbs in Austria, as well as those in the Principality of Serbia. However, one of his longer texts, entitled *Why Our People in Austria Perishes* and written in response to the question posed by Matica srpska, had much greater and broader ambitions in social (sociological) terms, i.e., he wanted to show the overall social state of the Serbian people in the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as find and point to the causes of such state. The analysis of this text is the subject of this paper, where we will try to point to its theoretical, methodological and other sociological aspects. As far as we know, so far there have been no attempts to perceive Đ. Natošević's work (also) as sociological and to rank him among the forerunners of Serbian sociology. Having this fact in mind, as well as that for proper understanding the contribution of an individual to sociological knowledge it is necessary to understand his/her social origin and social frameworks of action, we will first deal with Đ. Natošević's biography and then go on to the text analysis and finally sum up our analysis and proposals for further research.

TEACHER “DAD”

Đ. Natošević was born in Stari Slankamen (Srem) in 1821 to father Pavle and mother Sofija. After him, his parents had six more children, but only Đorđe and the youngest Petar survived. Petar was to become a respectable merchant in Novi Sad. Đorđe

⁴ Although no contributions are dedicated to him in the above-mentioned edition of *Sociološki pregled*, Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864) is also ranked among the forerunners of Serbian sociology (Mitrović, 1998).

finished primary school in his birthplace, in the German language, while he attended the grammar school in Sremski Karlovci (first six grades), and then in Segedin and Pest (Hungary). In Eperjes (today Prešov, Slovakia) he began studying law and then transferred to medicine, which he also studied in Pest and Vienna, and got the university degree in 1850. During his studies he met and socialized with famous Serbs such as Vuk Karadžić, Branko Radičević, Bogoboj Atancković and Mihailo Obrenović. He lived in the same house in Vienna with Mihailo Obrenović. At the time of revolutionary and war events in 1848/1849, Đorđe came to the region of Šajkaš to treat the wounded (Pevulja, 2021a; Monašević, 1887).

After completing his studies, he came to Novi Sad and immediately started his (private) medical practice. He soon became a respectable doctor and one of his patients was Bishop Platon Atanacković, who encouraged him to take up educational and literary work. Probably under the influence of Bishop Platon, who saw his own successor in Natošević in respect of pedagogical activity, in 1853 Đ. Natošević made a great turning point in his life by leaving medical practice and becoming first the teacher and then the school master in the Serbian Orthodox Grammar School in Novi Sad. Four years later (1857) he was appointed the counsellor and superintendent of the Serbian primary schools within the Viceroyalty in Timisoara. When Austria abolished the Voivodeship (Dukedom) of Serbia and Tamiški Banat (1861), he became the member of the School Council in the Hungarian Viceroyalty in Budim (Pevulja, 2021a; Monašević, 1887; Graorac, 1999).

In 1867, at the invitation by Prince Mihailo Obrenović, Natošević arrived in the Principality of Serbia and began working on the improvement of the school system as an official in the Ministry of Education. After the assassination of Prince Mihailo (1868), he returned to Novi Sad (1869), where he first worked as the head of primary schools in the town. As an eminent figure, he participated in the work of the Serbian National-Church Assembly in 1864 and 1869. Finally, in 1871, he was appointed the head official of the Serbian schools in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. He performed that duty as many as sixteen years, until his death in 1887 in Karlovac. Đ. Natošević was a full member of the Serbian Learned Society and a correspondent member of the Serbian Medical Society, while he performed his activity in Matica srpska also on the function of its President in the period 1881-1887. He was buried at the Assumption Cemetery in Novi Sad (Pevulja, 2021a; Monašević, 1887).

A physician by vocation, Natošević dedicated almost his entire career and life to the matters of national education, focusing on the improvement of the school system both among the Serbs in Austria and among those in the Principality of Serbia. Having become the master of the Serbian Orthodox Grammar School, he introduced the subject “gymnastic exercise”. Moreover, he was the one who introduced art and music in the curriculum, while he also improved the teaching of religious instruction. He asked for introducing content from the fields of fruit and vegetable cultivation and cattle breeding in textbooks. As the school superintendent in the Voivodeship of Serbia and

Tamiški Banat, and later in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, he particularly took care of improving the teachers' education, considering them the basis of a good and successful school system. In these affairs he cooperated with Nikola Đ. Vukićević (1830-1910), a long-serving master of Preparandija (Sombor-based branch of the Serbian School for Teachers), who subsequently succeeded him in the position of the main official of the Serbian schools in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. In 1858 he initiated the school journal (*Školski list*), the first Serbian pedagogical journal, aimed primarily at improving the teachers' work. Along with the journal, during a short period, the first Serbian children's newspaper was published under the name *Friend of Serbian Youth (Prijatelj srpske mladeži)*, in which, at Natošević's initiative, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj published his first poems for children. During his stay in the Principality of Serbia at the invitation of Prince Mihailo Obrenović, Natošević had the task to supervise the work of the primary schools. As an educated absolutist, Prince Mihailo strived towards the improvement of the school system and for that purpose he commissioned the most-experienced pedagogue among the Serbs. After reviewing the school work in the districts of Belgrade, Kragujevac, Smederevo and Požarevac. Natošević wrote extensive reports about the work organization in these schools, the teachers' social status, the school buildings, the staff etc. These reports were rather critically oriented and, apart from the description of the (poor) state in the primary schools, they contained proposals for improving such state. Soon after the assassination of Prince Mihailo, Natošević was dismissed from the Ministry of Education and Church Affairs because "his employment agreement had expired" (Pevulja, 2021a; Vujišić Živković, 2015).

Đ. Natošević is the author of over three hundred publications, including thirty books. Among them, especially important are his *Spelling Book for Serbian Primary Schools* (1870) and *Readers for the 1st and 2nd Grades* (1870. и 1872), in which Vuk Karadžić's orthography was applied for the first time in Serbian textbooks. Natošević pedagogical positions can be seen most clearly in two manuals: *A Short Guide for Serbian Folk Teachers* (1857 and 1861) and *Instructions for teaching literary science" to teachers of national colleges in the Austrian Empire* (1858). At Natošević's initiative, Vojislav Bakić began studying pedagogy in Germany – later he founded the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Apart from his extensive and diverse educational work, Natošević also collected pieces of folk wisdom (particularly proverbs and riddles) and published them in the *Annals of Matica srpska*. He also initiated the well-known edition of *Matica srpska*, "Books for the People" (Bogosavljević, 1996; Vujišić Živković, 2015; Pevulja, 2021a).

Extremely admired and respected in all Serbian territories, Natošević was called "Dad" by Serbian teachers because of his authority and fatherly attitude. M. Šević considered him "the greatest school figure among the Serb" (Šević according to Graorac, 1999, p. 216), while K. Monašević states that "(...) although Doctor Đorđe Natošević never visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, his spirit was present in all the Serbian schools there" (Monašević, 1887).

WHY DOES OUR PEOPLE IN AUSTRIA PERISH?

Concerned about the destiny of its people, in 1863 Matica srpska called a competition for treatises entitled *Why Our People in Austria Perishes*, promising to reward the winner with ten ducats. Đ. Natošević was the one who wrote the winning treatise on fifty pages and it was first published in the *Annals of Matica srpska* in 1865. During the following two years (1866/1867) Natošević's treatise was printed as a separate publication three more times (Pevulja, 2021b). Last time it was published on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Đ. Natošević's birth, i.e., in 2021, with the accompanying texts written by D. Pevulja. In the text below, we will always cite the pages of the latest edition.

The question of the competition itself ("Why Our People in Austria Perishes") imposed going beyond the field of the narrowest activities of the competitors, and that is why Đ. Natošević, although education (and thus the schools) had a very important role in his entire treatise, he also had to go beyond his common framework of activities and interests and step into a much broader social domain in order to answer the question posed by Matica srpska (Natošević, 2021). As we will see, in his text he covered a large number of social problems (phenomena) in all three spheres of the society: cultural, economic and political. This fact constitutes the first basis for our claim that Natošević should be considered one of the forerunners of Serbian sociology.

Another basis for our claim is that in his treatise Natošević indisputably applied a scientific approach, i.e., that of experiential sciences. He describes in detail every phenomenon he finds important, while also attempting to explain its current state, listing certain causes. Although there is not a single heading in this text, it was written quite systematically. The reader may easily follow how Natošević describes the types of failure, their causes etc. The fact that he did not use sociological terminology in his paper is easy to explain. Simply speaking, at the time when this treatise was written and published, sociology had not yet been established as a science. Here we will only mention that the main works of *Émile Durkheim* (1858-1917), who is considered the founder of sociology as a separate science, were not published until the last decade of the 19th century, while the first sociological journal, *Durkheim's* journal *L'Année sociologique*, was first published in 1898. Natošević's treatise is characterized by an exceptionally critical tone, which was completely in the spirit of Matica's question, stating in itself that "the Serbian people in Austria perishes", while he only asks for the causes of this phenomenon to be stated.

Natošević based the insights listed in the treatise on his own great experience. As a school superintendent, he had the opportunity to visit regularly the villages and towns where the Serbs lived and to acquire "first-hand" experience with many aspects and specific features of social life. In terms of methodology, we may say that, he applied a sort of non-systematic observation with participation. The data he obtained and presented in the text came from the period when he supervised the work of the Serbian schools in Austria, but were only used later for scientific purposes, i.e., for writing a treatise discussed here. It is also evident that Natošević was quite aware that social problems

could not be discussed “by rote”, without any experience about them. Therefore, among other things, he says the following:

“He who does not know the moral state of the municipalities should go there on Sundays or red-letter days, in the morning or in the afternoon, to see the meetings in church, at school, in the inn and during celebrations, and hear speeches, get acquainted with the feelings and desires. Then, listening to his own good or bad heart and soul, he can join either the young people’s dance (...) or the older people’s group, have a look at the (...), ask about games, see the competitions (...) and also peer into the nursery.”
(*Ibid*: 9-10)

The evidently qualitative character of Natošević’s method does not mean that he did not appreciate quantitative data available at the time and possible to be reached: “Everywhere numbers (should be – added by S. and M. Šljukić) collected that best open our eyes” (*Ibid*: 52). In other words, he believed that quantitative data (statistics etc.) showed the most precise picture of a phenomenon that was studied. In his text, A special place in his text is given to the comparative method, or the comparison of the Serbs and their social life with other ethnic entities in Austria (Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks and others). To Natošević, scientific knowledge was by no means a purpose of its own, but it should serve to improve and advance the social state of the people (*Ibid*: 52). It can also be seen from his assessment of the question posed by Matica srpska as “a great (...) and very important (...) question of life for this people” (*Ibid*: 7).

At the very beginning, Natošević defines types of failure and causes of perishment of the Serbs in Austria: “We are failing morally and materially, and we are perishing because few Serbs are born and because we become estranged” (*Ibid*: 7). Further in the text he presents his position exactly in this order and through the analysis, giving argument for it.

Moral perishment occurs in three places: at home, in church and in the municipality. The cause of perishment is “neglect and obtuseness” of the corresponding leaders. In a large number of them he observed the lack of pride or any principledness. Instead of taking care of the younger ones and of the future, the leaders only tend to fulfil their own “likes and passions”. They are too frequently careless when it comes to religiousness; they make false testimonies, swear falsely, forge signatures, take church and municipality money, buy and sell titles, “trade with justice” (i.e., they are corrupted – added by S. and M. Šljukić) and persecute those who insist on respecting the law (*Ibid*: 7-8). Natošević emphasizes that such leaders exist in other nations, but there is the largest number of them in our country (*Ibid*: 9, 11).

The consequence of the leaders’ behaviour is “the utter licentiousness of the younger ones” at home, in church and in the municipality. “Nobody pays attention nor takes care of what the younger ones are doing, and no one sets good examples to them; that is why they are becoming worse and worse. Therefore, even very young children are

spoiled and wilful; young boys are loose and impertinent; young girls are lazy and gaudy, women are debauched and boastful – there is paganism and demoralization everywhere” (*Ibid*: 9). Such state would be even worse if it were not for the remnants of the “innate feeling of religiousness, justice, truth and honesty” (*Ibid*: 9). We can see that Natošević, approaching the problem in an analytical manner (home, church, municipality; leaders and others), ascribes the responsibility for moral perishment to those with the largest social power (leaders), i.e., he thinks that power also presupposes certain responsibility for the state in the entire society.

Speaking of material perishment, he expresses his position about the social structure of the Serbian people in Austria of the time, distinguishing the following social strata: 1) spahis and rich men, 2) merchants and artisans, and 3) simple people (i.e., villages – added by S. and M. Šljukić; *Ibid*: 11). A very similar social structure of the Serbs in Vojvodina under Austria-Hungary had been described a little earlier by Vuk Karadžić, who used similar terms as well (Šljukić & Šljukić, 2012).

Natošević does not pay special attention to spahis (i.e., the ones he classifies and Serbian noblemen) and “other rich men”. His key objection to them is that they do not spend their assets and wealth for “beneficial and patriotic purposes”, such as education and travelling around the world, in order to learn something from other people and nations, but only on “playing cards, drinking and gypsy music”. Such behaviour of spahis and other rich men makes them perish materially, and their wealth flows into the pockets of the Jews, i.e., creditors who gave them loans for financing their excessive expenses (Natošević, 2021: 11).

Natošević’s objection to Serbian merchants is that they want to become rich “overnight”, that they do not approach their business seriously enough and that they do not invest efforts in it. As soon as they get a larger sum of money, they immediately spend it in a non-productive way, on luxurious goods and entertainment. In contrast to them, Natošević gives the example of Jews, because “a Jewish merchant is “(...) diligent and not ashamed of work, and he can find something useful to do at any time and in any place” (*Ibid*: 12). The Jews’ work ethics and their rational use of money are the patterns that Serbian merchants might follow. Serbian artisans have similar problems because they do not want to improve their crafts, but as soon as they start working, they look for ways to trade their craft products, but in such trade, they have no opportunities because there are better and more experienced merchants. Instead of joining together and have better results in the market, Serbian artisans “backstab one another” and “have entertainment with abandon” on patron saint’s day, name days, when a baby is born, at weddings, when they stand godfathers, or at funerals and memorial services (*Ibid*: 13, 15). Here we can see that Natošević realized the significance of small producers, in this case artisans, forming associations, Cooperatives, which he actually speaks about here, had only begun their formation elsewhere in the world (Šljukić, 2009).

According to Natošević, underdevelopment and weaknesses of our trade and crafts had grave economic consequences. Our extraordinary carving stone, coal, wood, grain,

fruits, seedlings, wine, brandy, linen, tow (hemp), silk, wax, wool and leather are being wasted “without any name or price” or they are sold to foreigners at a low price. We buy from others and pay a high price for bad goods: “wish-wash alcohol”, “rotten cotton” and “odds and ends”. The backwardness of our economy is proved by the fact that we do not have a single steam engine, “that it works for us and for our cattle” (Natošević, 2021: 13-15). Even at that time, Natošević obviously perceived the significance of industry in the era when it almost did not exist either in the Principality of Serbia or among the Serbs in Austria (Šljukić, 2018).

The main cause for such state among the leaders, spahis, rich men, merchants and artisans, according to Natošević, is “the lack of education”, i.e., the lack of good and necessary education. Other nations are not particularly educated either, but the little education they have is enough to win when competing with the Serbs (Natošević, 2021: 15-16). The lack of education is the main cause for the perishment of our peasants (“simple people”). They also spend plenty of money in a non-productive way, on various celebrations, patron saint’s days, funerals and weddings. Peasants also have too many free days (“patron saint’s days and red-letter days”), when they only eat and drink in the company of others. This is made worse by “bad and disastrous customs”, such as treating others to drinks and food when something is purchased or sold, or organized help when something is done or built: “(...) more money is wasted on drinks and food than if triple wages were paid for hiring such labour” (*Ibid*: 16-17). Everyone steals from our peasant: his wife (“because she must not walk around without anything to wear or without threads to sew her clothes”); he pays dearly to celebrate his son’s going to do the military service: he is robbed by the priest and skinned by the public notary, the lawyer and the judge, as well as by the creditor; this happens to our peasant because he is uneducated and obtuse“, he does not know his rights or duties, nor does he want to learn them (*Ibid*: 17). Taxes (“levies”) are high and they overburden the Serbian peasant, but other nations also pay taxes (Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks) without perishing (*Ibid*: 18). Material perishment of the peasants is definitely compounded by changed needs. Earlier, the peasant family used to meet its needs mostly by its own production (food, clothes, furniture), while now it has to buy almost all of these (and of poorer quality). Moreover, children today start drinking and smoking at an early age, which badly affects their health. The woman “(...) works much less but needs more”. Our grandmothers used to be good housewives unlike modern Serbian women, and Vlach, Hungarian or German women” are much harder working and tidier (...) than those in Serbia” (*Ibid*: 18-20).

Natošević says that our peasant is not only immoderate in spending, but also lazy, and “(...) as long as he does not need to do something, he will not move a finger” (*Ibid*: 22). He performs his jobs only when he is forced by the authorities, and even in that case he does them badly. He prefers cattle breeding to farming because there is less work there. He does not keep record of his activities or, if he does, the accounts are inaccurate; his tools are poor, “from the age of Adam”. The division of labour (“jobs”) in the peasant’s cooperative (i.e., family cooperative – added by S. and M. Šljukić) is not developed, which substantially reduces the potential work performance and production. Both peasants’

and municipal houses are untidy and poorly kept (*Ibid*: 22-26). Peasants from all other nations are better than ours. While a German accomplishes much by working and saving money and leads a tidy and moderate life, our peasant does not want to learn, he runs away from school, does not want to introduce novelties in his work. The Serbian peasant does not want to follow the example of those who are evidently better than him, but on the contrary, he boasts of “(...) ploughing better than any German (...), but he is just worse off” (*Ibid*: 27).

In Natošević's opinion, moral and material perishment leads to the disappearance of the Serbs as a nation because in such circumstances there are fewer marriages, fewer children are born and more people die prematurely. Many men and women avoid getting married because they are interested only in wealth; girls are often spoilt and no one – merchants, artisans or peasants – will want to marry them; everybody avoids (without any justification) getting married for the second or the third time (*Ibid*: 28-30). There is an increasing number of those (in all social strata) who live in common marriage, and for them it is shameful to have children, and they “poison the foetus and the womb”. This is also done by soldiers' wives as soon as their husbands go away; it is the fault of the leaders because they do not take care of them. “Poisoning the foetus and the womb” is also done because of the wrong belief that pregnancy destroys female beauty; fewer children are born because of the drinking habit that badly affects health (*Ibid*: 31). Very many children, but also adults, die prematurely due to the lack of proper care, due to neglect, untidiness, drunkenness and searching for medications from quacks and witch doctors. Women in labour are not given enough attention and they give birth in stables, sheds and cellars. The woman who has just had a baby is made to work hard by her husband only two or three days after the labour, and that is why many of them die prematurely. Many drunken men have a fight, maim or kill someone and do other evil things (*Ibid*: 32-33).

Natošević finds the situation in Krajina (the frontier regions under the military governance – added by S. and M. Šljukić) as somewhat different, because, despite the large number of casualties in the wards, the people there still multiply and do not perish like in the provincial regions under the civilian governance. According to him, in Krajina there are no such moral and material evils like in the provincial regions; the houses, gardens and farms are tidier, villages are cleaner, cattle is better. That is why military governance is better for our people, like in Krajina, than its provincial freedom. This is partly due to the fact that in Krajina there are no spahis and Jews – the former destroying the people morally, and the latter materially (*Ibid*: 34). Although Natošević accuses Jews on several occasions of enrichment at the expense of the Serbs (and not only them) who do not deal with money skilfully, he virtually admires their ability to survive in extremely difficult circumstances. Despite all the persecutions they suffered, their persistent observance of their own laws and orders (“ever since the times of Moses”) has made them (...) grow from the Abrahamic people into a great and strong people able “(...) to buy the world” (*Ibid*: 35). In this way, Natošević actually states that the Jews do not owe their wealth only to their trading skills, but also to their moral strength and consistency.

The second reason for the perishment of the Serbs in Austria emphasized by Natošević is estrangement: “Many of us are destroyed by estrangement, by joining other nations or churches. We become Vlachs, Hungarians, Germans, Italians and Turks” (*Ibid*: 35). The Serbs give no resistance to it: we do not inform our closest neighbours about it, let alone foreign countries. While others “rob what is not theirs and tell lies to bring the world to their side”, we are unable to use the truth and justice, which are on our side, to our own benefit (*Ibid*: 36-37). We could say that as early as the mid-19th century Natošević observed the problem that will be repeated among the Serbs much later, for example in the conflicts at the end of the 20th century.

Our author also recognizes some other constant features when speaking of estrangement and conflicts in that era, as well as afterwards. The lack of education, but also of pride, in his opinion, was why the Serbs, unlike other nations, became estranged immediately after converting to a different religion. That is the reason why the Serbs also perish politically, which is also contributed to by emphasizing their regional affiliation at the expense of the national affiliation; that is the guilt of our politicians, educated people, clerks and generals. Besides Magyarization, the greatest threat to the Serbs is the aspiration “(...) of our Croatian brothers who, despite not knowing their own name until recently, set out to make us Illyrian or Yugoslav and to stop us being Serbian (...); Dositej Obradović was also Croatian (...) and now they have taken our language as well, claiming that it is theirs (...); we should be erased from the people, and that is how we are guided; our brothers want to steal us together with our language” (*Ibid*: 40-41).

After a detailed description of the poor circumstances of the Serbs in Austria, Natošević wonders that are the chances of revival, but here he also has disastrous projections. One of the factors of revival and social shift, in his opinion, could be the church, but the priests were neglected, the monks were poor, while the monasteries were being ruined. Bishops might help most to improve such situation, both with their moral strength and by helping the exploration of the causes of the perishment of the people and by finding means of preserving the people (*Ibid*: 42-44). Natošević considered schools the second factor of a possible revival, primarily because “(...) the most educated nations were and will be the wealthiest, strongest and most free, while the non-educated ones were nothing but someone else’s servants and slaves” (*Ibid*: 44). As a long-serving school superintendent, he had first-hand insight into the state of the Serbian schools in Austria. According to him, our schools are “sad and poor”; our seminaries are “miserable”, and out of three schools for teachers, only one was good enough; we had no merchant, artisan and agricultural schools, while primary schools were “sad”; there were no girl schools; the only thing we had were numerous scholarships, but they were not used sufficiently, and they were less efficient than good schools in any case; there were no expert books at all, and nor there were serious newspapers (*Ibid*: 44-50). For this state in the Serbian schools, the greatest responsibility was assumed by leaders, but also by educated Serbs, because they did not deal with “educating the people”, but had only their glory in mind (*Ibid*: 49). Natošević criticism included Matica srpska when he says that it should take more care of the people’s needs and publish books useful for the people instead of awarding

poems and saving money; the books published by Matica srpska were not distributed, but just “gathered dust in the cases and boxes” (*Ibid*: 50-51).

Aware of his rather sharp criticism, Natošević justifies it by saying that it was necessary and writes: “Wherever wounds grave like this are being cured, no matter how gently and sensibly we proceed, we must also cause some pain; that is why I should be forgiven – I have done everything with love” (*Ibid*: 52).

CONCLUSION

A physician by vocation, teacher, grammar school master in Novi Sad, long-serving superintendent of the Serbian schools and President of Matica srpska, Đorđe Natošević wrote, among his numerous texts, the treatise entitled *Why Our People in Austria Perishes*. The paper was awarded at the eponymous competition called by Matica srpska in 1863. Unlike his other texts, in which he deals mostly with the matters of education, in this treatise Natošević covers a large number of social problems in the fields of culture, economy and politics. His treatise also has the characteristics of a sociological analysis because, while using the experience and methods that might be classified as direct (non-systematic) observation, he attempts to describe and explain the discussed phenomena. He does all this in a systematic manner, having in mind the need for the results of his review of the state and the listed causes to be used in order to design measures for the prevention of the failure of the Serbian people in Austria. Natošević distinguishes several social layers among the Serbs, thus actually describing the social structure of the time. He justifies his extreme (sometimes excessive) criticism, particularly towards the social elite (“masters at home, in church and in the municipality”) by the seriousness of social problems, stating that he did it “out of love”, because he wanted the people to which he belonged “to awaken from” lethargy and reverse unfavourable trends. Because of the above-mentioned, as well as because he lived and worked at the time when sociology had not yet been established as a science either in Serbia or in the world, our opinion is that Đ. Natošević should be considered one of the forerunners of Serbian sociology.

The aim of future research, which would take into account the analyzed work of Đ. Natošević, may be a comparison with the contributions of some other forerunners of Serbian sociology, primarily Svetozar Marković (1846-1875). Natošević and Marković lived in the same era, dealt with the same or similar problems, the former in the Principality of Serbia, the latter in Austria. It would be interesting and useful in multiple ways to discover similarities and differences in their analyses. Moreover, it would be significant to explore the current element of some of Natošević’s insights in order to perceive (potential) continuity of the problems faced by the Serbian society. If such continuity was established, it would definitely bring added value to the work and contribution of Đorđe Natošević.

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